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AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH

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AXIS OPERATIONS ON CRETE

19 MAY - 3 JUNE 1941

EXTRACTS FROM

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LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT No. 619 (20 May 1941)

German Operations

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

19 May: Results of reconnaissance over Crete:

1050 hours,  
Iraklion harbour: 10 small boats and 1 small transport

0815 hours,  
Suda Bay: 1 heavy cruiser on fire,  
5 light warships,  
5 medium and  
8 small merchant ships.

1612 hours,  
Suda Bay: 1 freighter (4,500 tons) apparently on fire,  
1 tanker (6,500 tons) on fire,  
1 cruiser - hit on stern by heavy bomb  
otherwise no changes.

Airfields

Maleme 17 single-engined aircraft, including 4 damaged  
and one apparently on fire,  
1 multiple-engined aircraft.

Iraklion: 11 aircraft (no details given).

Further interpretation of photographic reconnaissance carried out on 11 May showed an airfield with three runways to be under construction one kilometre south-west of Kastelli.

No shipping was observed in the sea areas north of the Peloponnes, north of Crete and between the African coast and the southern tip of Kythera.

At 0950 hours a battleship of 13,000 tons moving at high speed on an easterly course was observed 70 km south-east of Rhodes.

At 1625 hours four destroyers and three heavy cruisers moving at high speed on a north-westerly course were observed 80 km south of Gavdos Island.

At 1650 hours two battleships and eight destroyers on a north-westerly course were observed in the same area.

Operations

19 May: Between 0515 and 0700 hours twelve dive-bombers attacked shipping in Suda Bay. A hit with a 500 kg bomb was scored on a cruiser of the "York" class. Escorting fighters set on fire three Hurricanes on the ground at Maleme airfield and apparently damaged six others extensively. Six guns were silenced by a direct hit on an AA position.

Defence

19 May:  
Suda Bay: very strong light and heavy AA fire.

Losses

German: None

Enemy: 3 Hurricanes on the ground at Maleme

LUFTWAFFE

R E S T R I C T E D

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 620 ( 21 April 1941)

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

20 May: In the early morning reconnaissance was carried out over the entire sea area around Crete. No enemy shipping was observed.

At 0750 hours reconnaissance observed two medium merchant ships on fire and a destroyer at anchor in Suda Bay. A heavy cruiser moving at full speed on a north-westerly course was observed 150 km south of Gavdos Island.

Operations

20 May: At 0550 hours eleven light bombers attacked Iraklion airfield and nearby AA and machine gun positions. Hits were also scored on fuel dumps.

In addition, AA positions west of Maleme and at Canea were attacked by eighteen and twenty-eight dive-bombers respectively. Most of the AA guns in the areas which were attacked were put out of action, as there was no AA fire after the operation had been carried out.

An airborne operation against Crete with bomber and fighter support was launched at 0600 hours, the main areas of attack being Maleme and Canea. The operation is proceeding according to plan.

Between 0700 and 0930 hours a further 59 bombers attacked tent encampments and AA positions in the area Maleme - Canea and signals installations in the area Canea - Rethimmon - Iraklion - Ierapetra (southern coast).

Between 1125 and 1145 hours fifteen bombers scored direct hits on artillery positions at Iraklion. Only two guns were still firing after the attack.

Alikianou was occupied by German troops at 1300 hours.

Ships in Suda Bay were dive-bombed at 1340 hours. Direct hits were scored on ships and AA positions in the southern part of the bay.

21 May: Enemy resistance in the bunkers on the eastern edge of Maleme airfield has been broken. The area to the west is clear of the enemy. Aircraft have been able to use the airfield since 0730 hours. Enemy night attacks at Galatas were driven off.

German attacks on Iraklion airfield have been in progress since 0630 hours. German troops are advancing on the town of Iraklion. The airfield and town of Rethimmon are in German hands.

In the early morning enemy cruisers and light warships in the sea area west of Crete (between Crete and Antikythera) moved into the Aegean. Enemy destroyers appeared off Iraklion. These warships, which made a hurried withdrawal from the sea area north of Crete, have been under air attack since 0800 hours.

Defence

Maleme mainly slight AA fire of light and medium calibre and machine gun fire.

Suda Bay: strong AA fire of all calibres.

Losses

German: None

Enemy: None

/Italian

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Italian Operations

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

20 May: At 1330 hours reconnaissance reported an aircraft-carrier, a battleship, a cruiser and three destroyers on a north-westerly course about 130 km south-east of Crete.

Operations

20 May: At 0700 hours bombers attacked barracks at Iraklion.

Losses

Italian: None reported

Enemy: None reported

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 621 (22 April 1941)

German Operations

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Operations

21 May: In support of the operations on Crete single-engined and twin-engined fighter formations were sent out to neutralise ground defence at Maleme airfield and to attack enemy forces in the landing area. During the day bombers made repeated attacks on warships in the sea area around Crete.

In the operations against ground targets by 54 bombers and 26 dive-bombers, attacks were made on artillery and infantry positions in the areas of Rethimnon, Frinos, Maleme, Canea, Iraklion and Suda Bay. An oil and ammunition dump at Malochi was set on fire. In addition, two hits with 50 kg bombs were scored on a warship off Canea.

26 bombers and 31 dive-bombers carried out operations against enemy warships. In the morning south-east of Crete a direct hit was scored on a cruiser which caught fire. A hit was scored on a destroyer and on a merchant ship of 1,000 tons which came to a standstill. One 1,000 kg bomb fell near one cruiser, three 500 kg bombs fell near a second and two 500 kg bombs fell near a third.

A battleship was probably hit south of Kythera. A direct hit was scored on a cruiser with a 1,400 kg bomb. Smoke was observed coming from a 10,000 ton cruiser after it had been hit.

In the afternoon a battleship in the same area was hit with a 500 kg bomb (a 1,000 kg bomb fell near the ship). A cruiser was hit by a 500 kg bomb; smoke was observed coming from the warship and it began to list. A hit with a 500 kg bomb was scored on the bows of a cruiser. A 1,400 kg bomb fell near another cruiser which was probably damaged. Altogether hit were scored on one battleship, five cruisers, one destroyer and one merchant ship.

In addition, an enemy submarine was hit north of Crete (time not stated).

One bomber is missing.

Losses

German: 1 Do 17 (Crete)

Enemy: None

/Italian

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Italian Operations

Air Situation - Mediterranean

Reconnaissance

20 May: At 1330 hours an aircraft-carrier, a battleship, a cruiser and three destroyers on a north-westerly course were observed about 120 km south-east of Crete.

At 1355 hours the same formation was observed 35 km south-east of Gavdos Island.

21 May: At 1735 hours two battleships, two cruisers and two destroyers on a north-north-westerly course were observed about 105 km south-south-east of the eastern tip of Crete.

Operations

20 May: Eleven bombers made an effective attack on the airfield and barracks south of Iraklion. Fires were observed.

Fifteen bombers attacked Ierapetra (southern coast of Crete).

Fighters escorted the bombers over Iraklion and Ierapetra.

Losses

Italian: None

Enemy: None

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 622 (23 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Reconnaissance

22 May: At 1320 hours reconnaissance over the sea area north of Crete observed an enemy naval force comprising one battleship and several large and many small warships moving at medium speed on a westerly course about 15 km west of the island of Antikythera. The enemy warships bombarded Crete.

Ten large and five small warships located west of Crete bombarded the island at 1540 hours. 15 km west of Antikythera Island a warship, apparently a light cruiser, was observed to be stationary and on fire. Three destroyers moving south at full speed on a zig zag course were also observed.

Operations

21 May: A number of powered sailing craft were destroyed when enemy warships attacked a group of these vessels. The personnel aboard the ships which were sunk are missing.

22 May: Enemy tanks which appeared east of Maleme were effectively attacked from the air. Airborne units attacked the town of Maleme from the east and west and forced the enemy back in the direction of Canea. The coast was reached at Pirgos (east of Maleme) and advance detachments are just outside Platania.

Further German reinforcements were brought in during the day.

No fresh reports have been received from the Canea and the Rethimnon sectors.

/Elements

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Elements of the Iraklion group forced their way into the town and evacuated again after mopping up.

German and Italian Operations

22 May: In the morning enemy warships moved into the Aegean and reached Milos. An attack was made on a group of German powered sailing craft escorted by Italian torpedo boats. The Italian escorts intercepted the attack and saved the transports. In this action an Italian torpedo boat scored two hits and sank a British cruiser.

Towards noon a second enemy formation attempted to move into the sea area north of Crete from the south-west.

Enemy naval forces in the Crete area comprise four battleships, twelve cruisers and eighteen destroyers, most of which were located between 75 and 180 km west of Crete during the day. In addition, an aircraft-carrier was believed to be between Crete and North Africa.

German Operations

22 May: Bombers and dive-bombers were sent out to attack the enemy warships moving towards Crete and into the Aegean. According to reports received so far the following results were achieved:

- 2 cruisers and 1 destroyer sunk,
- 1 battleship and 3 cruisers damaged,
- 5 warships (type not stated) and
- 1 merchant ship hit (results not observed).

During the midday period the enemy formation retired in a south-westerly direction under the effect of these attacks.

In addition to the attacks on shipping, bombers, dive-bombers and single-engined and twin-engined fighters supported ground troops on Crete by attacking enemy strong-points, artillery and anti-tank positions and tanks, particularly in the Maleme area.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	2 Ju 87 )	
	2 Ju 88 )	(Crete Area)
	1 Me 110 )	

Italian Operations

Crete

Reconnaissance

21 May: The following were observed:

- 1100 hours: two battleships, two cruisers and eight destroyers on south-easterly course about 35 km west of Antikythera Island.
- 1740 hours: an enemy formation comprising two battleships, three cruisers and two destroyers on a north-westerly course about 130 km south-south-east of Cape Sidhero.
- 1820 hours: One ship of 10,000 tons on a south-westerly course about 130 km south-west of Crete.

/Operations

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Operations

21 May: Eleven bombers attacked an enemy warship formation reported 72 km south of the Caso Channel by a patrol boat at 0915 hours. A cruiser sank immediately after being hit by a bomb. Three torpedo-bombers could not carry out an attack owing to defence. Fighters escorting the bombers observed large pools of oil at the place where the cruiser was sunk.

Other fighters carried out patrols over airfields in the Aegean area.

Situation at Sea

20 May: A formation of enemy destroyers bombarded the island of Calino (north of Cos, 130 km north-west of Rhodes). 15 men were wounded and aircraft were damaged.

21 May: At 2230 hours the Italian torpedo-boat "Lupo" scored two hits on a cruiser of the "Leander" class at Cape Spatha. The cruiser stopped and was observed to be listing heavily.

Defence

Strong AA from the warships south of the Caso Channel.

Losses

Italian: None reported

Enemy: None reported

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 623 (24 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Reconnaissance

23 May: There were no enemy warships in the sea area north of Crete. Light enemy warships were observed moving off east and west of Crete.

At midday three battleships, six cruisers and twelve destroyers on course for Alexandria were observed about 230 km south-east of Crete.

At 1511 hours two cruisers on a north-easterly course were observed about 300 km south of the eastern tip of Crete.

No enemy shipping was observed in the sea area Crete by reconnaissance carried out north of the 34th parallel until 1900 hours. There are believed to be two small formations of light warships in the area south of the 34th parallel.

There are no indications of attempts to disembark British troops on the southern coast of Crete.

Operations

23 May: Ground forces in action on Crete were reinforced by the arrival of further formations in the Maleme sector. Operations are continuing according to plan. Stalos (east of Maleme) and Paliokhora (southern coast) were reached. The attack on Suda Bay is proceeding.

The situation of the Rethimnon and Iraklion groups is unchanged.

Bombers and fighters supported ground forces at Maleme, Rethimnon and Iraklion and carried out attacks on Iraklion, Ierapetra and Suda Bay. Hits were scored on columns and tanks in the Maleme - Ganea area and on AA positions and tanks in the Suda Bay area.

/During

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During the morning the Luftwaffe destroyed five out of six M.T.B.'s which entered Suda Bay.

In the afternoon two enemy merchant ships of 5,000 tons and 2,000 tons were hit in Suda Bay. The 2,000 ton ship sank after an explosion.

In further air attacks on enemy naval forces three destroyers were sunk and three damaged.

At 1830 hours an air attack was made on Iraklion. Large fires were caused in the town and a Hurricane and Gloster were burnt out on the airfield. Further attacks were made on Rethimmon.

According to reports so far received enemy warship losses from 20 May to 23 May inclusive are as follows:

Losses caused by German forces:

Sunk: 5 cruisers,  
7 destroyers,  
1 submarine,  
5 M.T.B.'s.

Damaged: 1 battleship,  
15 cruisers,  
6 destroyers.

Losses caused by Italian forces:

Sunk: 2 cruisers,  
1 destroyer,  
1 submarine.

Damaged: 4 cruisers.

Total: Sunk: 7 cruisers,  
8 destroyers,  
2 submarines,  
5 M.T.B.'s.

Damaged: 1 battleship,  
19 cruisers,  
6 destroyers.

It is possible that among the ships listed as sunk there may be some previously reported damaged.

Enemy Operations

Crete

23 May: Maleme airfield was attacked at 1500 hours by five Blenheims and at 1800 hours by two low-flying fighters. Two out of three more Blenheims which attacked the airfield were shot down.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	None	
<u>Enemy:</u>	2 Blenheims (Maleme)	
	1 Hurricane	} (on the ground at Iraklion)
	1 Gloster	

/Italian

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R E S T R I C T E D

Italian Operations

Crete

23 May: Results of reconnaissance:

- 0608 hours: 5 cruisers on a south-easterly course 18 km north-west of Cape Sidhero.
- 0639 hours: 1 cruiser on a southerly course 27 km north-east of Cape Sidhero.
- 0700 hours: 4 destroyers on a north-north-easterly course about 300 km south-east of Crete.

Morning reconnaissance over Ierapetra, Iraklion and Candia was uneventful.

Aircraft searched without success from 1217 to 1630 hours for warships reported on course for the Caso Channel.

Afternoon reconnaissance reported two destroyers on a north-westerly course about 100 km south of the eastern tip of Crete at 1550 hours. At 1730 hours an aircraft-carrier, three battleships and a number of cruisers and destroyers were observed in Alexandria harbour. This indicates that the main British naval force has withdrawn from the sea area Crete.

Losses

Italian: None reported

Enemy: None reported

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 624 (25 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

24 May: The position in the Maleme sector was further consolidated. After hard fighting against British troops and guerillas Kastelli - Kisamou (west of Maleme) was taken. Motor-cycle troops reached Paliokhora. The town was occupied at 1800 hours.

At Rethimnon German troops are located east of the airfield and have linked up with a force which landed to the north-east.

At Iraklion the position was further consolidated by the landing of further airborne formations and effective ground support operations by the Luftwaffe. According to the latest air reconnaissance report, Iraklion is clear of the enemy. The slight AA defence which was still being put up at the airfield in the morning was no longer encountered in the afternoon.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

24 May: Two enemy destroyers were reported in the sea area Crete during the morning only.

In Suda Bay there were sixteen large and medium ships, one tanker of about 10,000 tons on fire and four presumably sunken ships. The sea area north of Crete was clear of the enemy in the afternoon.

/Operations

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R E S T R I C T E D

Operations

24 May: The Luftwaffe supported ground troops operating between Maleme and Canea and at Rethimmon and Iraklion. Hits were scored on battery positions, AA and machine-gun positions, huts, tent encampments and signals installations, some of which were destroyed. At Iraklion two aircraft on the ground were damaged.

In attacks on shipping in Suda Bay a freighter of 1,000 tons was damaged and ten 50 kg bombs fell near a ship of 500 tons. South of Sfakia (southern coast, 35 km east of Palickhora) a freighter of 1,000 - 1,500 tons was sunk.

Losses

German:

<u>22 May:</u>	4 Ju 87's	} missing
	2 Ju 88's	
	3 Me 110's	shot down.
<u>23 May:</u>	1 Ju 87	shot down
<u>24 May:</u>	2 Ju 87's	) missing
	1 Do 17	

(All on operations over Crete)

Enemy: Not reported.

Italian Operations

Crete

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

24 May: At 0540 hours two cruisers each of 7,000 tons were sighted about 40 km south-east of Cape Sidhero. At 0735 hours two destroyers were observed 220 km south-east of Cape Sidhero. The warships were all on a south-easterly course.

Operations

24 May: Bombers and fighters made several attacks on the towns of Mokhos, Kastelli (25 km south-east of Iraklion) and Arkalokhori (23 km south-east of Iraklion) and on troop movements and tent encampments east of Mokhos and Arkalokhori.

Losses

<u>Italian:</u>	None
<u>Enemy:</u>	None reported

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 625 (26 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

25 May: There was no fighting on the Maleme sector during the night. A few

/local

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local gains were made during the day. The enemy has apparently established a switch-line between Alikianou and Galatas. Suda is strongly fortified.

Small detachments advancing north-west from Kastelli encountered and overcame slight enemy resistance. East of Maleme the enemy is falling back on Galatas.

The enemy made Kastelli airfield unusable with barbed wire entanglements and trenches.

The situation on the Rethimmon sector is unchanged.

In an action at Iraklion the enemy lost 35 killed and 31 prisoners. German losses amounted to one killed and three wounded. The German position was further consolidated.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

25 May: Reconnaissance over the sea area Crete was impeded by bad weather. At 0840 hours one battleship, five cruisers and six destroyers were sighted on a south-westerly course 250 km south-east of Crete.

In the sea area south of Crete single cruisers were observed moving on a south-westerly course.

There were two freighters of 2 - 8,000 tons in Iraklion harbour.

At Iraklion airfield AA defence was active again and an enemy fighter was observed. There were defence positions on the western edge of Iraklion town and trenches on the airfield.

Operations

25 May: Fighters covered landings on Maleme airfield.

The main bomber force operated in the Canea area in direct support of airborne troops. Countless large fires broke out at Alikianou and in Canea. A large explosion in the western part of Canea was apparently caused by a direct hit on an ammunition dump. Factories in the harbour area and an old fort were also successfully bombed.

At Iraklion dive-bombers sank a 2,000 ton merchant ship and 500 ton freighter.

Enemy Operations

25 May: During the day Blenheims and Hurricanes made repeated attacks on Maleme airfield. Three Blenheims and three Hurricanes were shot down in air combat.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	None reported.
<u>Enemy:</u>	2 Glosters
<u>24 May:</u>	1 Wellington (set on fire - Crete).
<u>25 May:</u>	3 Blenheims ) (shot down in air combat - Maleme)
	3 Hurricanes )

Italian Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

25 May: In the afternoon five Italian torpedo-boats set out from Rhodes to land Italian troops on Crete.

/Air Situation

R E S T R I C T E D

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

24 May: At 0735 hours there were two destroyers on a south-easterly course about 150 km south-east of Crete.

Operations

24 May: Bombers made successful attacks on military objectives at Kastelli and Mokhos and the airfields at Iraklion and Ierapetra.

Fighters shot up troop concentrations in the Arkalokhori - Mokhos area and at Kastelli. One fighter is missing.

25 May: Bombers and fighters successfully bombed and shot up the town of Ierapetra and troop concentrations in the vicinity.

Losses

Italian:

24 May: 1 Cr 42 (Crete)

Enemy: None reported

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 626 (27 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

26 May: In the western sector the enemy fell back to the east after German troops had taken Galatas.

German attacks in the direction of Suda are progressing. Alikianou was taken and the road from Fournes to the dam (2 km east of Alikianou) was reached in an attack which made good progress in the direction of the road south-east of Suda.

German airborne reinforcements were brought in according to plan and without a hitch.

Forces advancing westwards overcame slight enemy resistance when moving through the pass west of Kastelli in the direction of Platanos.

The situation in the Rethimnon sector is unchanged.

The position at Iraklion was further consolidated. South of Iraklion units located west of the town and east of the airfield have established visual contact. The airfield is under the fire of German heavy weapons.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

26 May: British warships, including a battleship, cruisers and destroyers are active in the sea area south of 34° North. No enemy warships were observed in the sea area around Crete. There were also no shipping movements or indications of landings in the coastal waters of the island. According to photographic reconnaissance, the amount of shipping in Suda Bay has not changed. There are no serviceable ships available.

At Rethimnon reconnaissance observed German troops east of the town displaying a visual sign reading "Enemy on eastern edge of the town".

Reconnaissance was impeded by bad weather.

/Operations

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Operations

26 May: Bomber and dive-bomber formations supported the advance of the western group throughout the day with attacks on enemy resistance wherever it appeared and on tent encampments, hut sites, troop concentrations, AA positions and radio transmitters. The transmitter at Canea was destroyed and large fires broke out in the town.

Bombers sank a transport of about 8,000 tons escorted by three destroyers which was moving on a northerly course south of Crete. Two direct hits were scored with 250 kg bombs and several more bombs fell near the ship.

Dive-bombers probably damaged a submarine in the vicinity of Kythera Island. Large trails of oil were observed.

Defence

Iraklion: weak light AA fire.

Enemy Operations

Crete

26 May: Hurricanes and Swordfish aircraft attacked Kirtomadho airfield (near Alikianhou) in the early morning.

Two fighters attacked Maleme airfield. One of the enemy aircraft was brought down by ground defence.

Losses

German: None reported.

Enemy:

26 May: 1 fighter (AA fire at Maleme)

Italian Operations

No Italian operations in the Crete area were reported.

Enemy Operations

During the night of 25/26 May enemy aircraft bombed Rhodes and Scarpanto airfield. Nine aircraft were damaged and one man was killed.

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 627 (28 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

27 May: Reinforcements were brought up to units in action in the western sector. The attack towards the east is making good progress.

/During

R E S T R I C T E D

During attacks in the direction of Suda Bay Canea was taken during the afternoon and the enemy forces located around the town were forced back on to the Akrotiri peninsula. German forces advanced along the northern side of Suda Bay to about 1.5 km north-west of Suda Island and reached Megalo Chorafia and Armeni south of the bay. The enemy is falling back in the direction of Rethimmon.

A large number of partisan groups are in action in the Iraklion area. Some of them, using captured weapons, are fighting tenaciously and with cruelty.

No fresh reports have been received from the Rethimmon sector.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

27 May: In the morning small formations of enemy light warships on course for Alexandria were observed south and south-east of Crete. There were no enemy warships to be seen in the sea area Crete after midday. On the high ground west of Armeni there is an enemy position which is apparently intended to serve as a rallying point for enemy troops withdrawing south of Suda Bay.

Operations

27 May: Bomber and dive-bomber formations carried out several successful ground support operations in the Canea area and attacked enemy troop concentrations, artillery positions and tent encampments in the area between Canea and Rethimmon.

During the day bombers and dive-bombers attacked enemy shipping in the sea area Crete with the following results:

Suda Bay: 1 merchant ship of 2,000 tons sunk by bomb hits.  
1 merchant ship of 500 tons sunk by a direct hit with one 250 kg bomb.  
1 merchant ship of 4,000 tons badly damaged by a direct hit with one 500 kg bomb.  
1 merchant ship of 4,000 tons damaged by a direct hit with one 250 kg bomb.  
1 merchant ship of 2,500 tons badly damaged by direct hits with two 250 kg bombs.

Cape Dhrapani: 2 small merchant ships damaged by near misses with several 50 kg. bombs.

35 km N of Cape Sidhero 1 small warship damaged by a near miss with one 500 kg bomb.

5 km SW of Cape Krios: 1 merchant ship of 150 tons damaged by near misses with three 50 kg bombs.

50 km SW of Cape Krios: 1 merchant ship of 1,000 tons damaged by a near miss with one 250 kg bomb. Patches of oil were observed on the water.

In the sea area west of Crete dive-bombers attacked a mine-sweeper. The effect was not observed.

/Enemy Operations

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R E S T R I C T E D

Enemy Operations

Crete

During the evening of 27 May and the night of 27/28 May enemy aircraft attacked Maleme airfield. Two unserviceable transport aircraft were destroyed on the ground.

Losses

German:

26 May: 1 He 111 (Crete - missing)  
27 May: 1 Ju 88 )  
1 Ju 87 ) (Crete - missing)  
1 Do 17

Enemy:

26 May: 2 Hurricanes (Maleme - air battle)  
3 Blenheims (Maleme - air battle)  
1 Wellington (Iraklion)  
27 May: None reported.

Italian Operations

Crete

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

27 May: An enemy cruiser of 7,000 tons and two destroyers were observed 35 km south-east of Cape Sidhero at 0535 hours and 38 km south-east of Kufonissi at 0702 hours.

No enemy warships were observed in and south of the Caso Channel.

Operations

26 May: At 1950 hours a torpedo-bomber attacked an enemy formation 100 km south-south-east of Cape Lithinos. Owing to strong defensive fire results could not be observed.  
27 May: Fighters on patrol over Rhodes encountered two Hurricanes. One of the enemy aircraft was hit and probably destroyed.

No enemy aircraft were encountered by other fighters which escorted reconnaissance aircraft.

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 628 (29 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

28 May: Elements of units in action in the western sector, to which further /reinforcements

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reinforcements were brought up during the day, reached the villages of Kalivas, Vamos and Kalamitsi and are advancing on Rethimmon. Other elements moved south from Suda Bay and took Kaina and Brosnero. Motorised advanced detachments in close pursuit of the enemy forces falling back on Sfakia have already advanced south beyond Brosnero.

More paratroops were dropped in the Iraklion sector. German forces advanced on Iraklion from the east and took the town and airfield on the morning of 29 May. Large numbers of vehicles and tanks and stocks of fuel were captured. 500 British troops were taken prisoner and 200 German prisoners liberated.

No fresh reports have been received from the Rethimmon sector.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

28 May: A hitherto unknown landing strip with British fighters and bombers was observed on Messara Bay at Timbaki. This airfield was attacked later.

An M/T convoy was observed moving south along the Alikambos - Sfakia road.

Operations

28 May: Bomber and dive-bomber formations supported the advance of the western group by attacking enemy strong-points, M/T columns and camps.

The town of Iraklion was attacked three times by strong formations. Other attacks were made on Sfakia and Ayia Roumeli (southern coast) and the landing strip at Timbaki. Fires were caused in the towns which were attacked and an enemy aircraft was destroyed on the ground at Timbaki.

Bombers sent out in the morning on operations against shipping attacked Rethimmon as an alternative target.

Aircraft sank a merchant ship of 800 tons east of Suda Bay and a patrol boat south-west of the western tip of Crete.

Enemy Operations

Crete

28 May: Maleme airfield was attacked in the morning. Two of the enemy aircraft were brought down by AA.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	None reported
<u>Enemy:</u>	2 Blenheims by AA at Maleme. 1 Blenheim destroyed on ground at Timbaki.

Italian Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

28 May: The Italian troops from Rhodes landed at Sitia at 1730 hours according to plan.

/Air Situation

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

27 May: At 0700 hours a cruiser and two destroyers on a south-easterly course were observed 45 km south of Kufonissi.

Operations

27 May: Bombers attacked military objectives at Ierapetra.

No enemy aircraft were encountered by fighters which carried out patrols over Rhodes and escort operations over the Caso Channel.

Defence

27 May: Strong AA fire from the warships 45 km south of Kufonissi which forced torpedo-bombers to turn back.

Enemy Operations

Enemy aircraft bombed the islands of Rhodes and Scarpanto during the night of 27/28 May. No damage was caused.

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

SITUATION REPORT NO. 629 (30 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

29 May: Enemy rearguards were still offering resistance during the night of 28/29 May on the high ground south-east of Suda Bay, particularly east of Stilos and Vamos. This resistance was overcome. During the day units of the western battle group, reinforced by tanks which had been landed in the meantime, advanced along the northern coast and reached Rethimmon. Contact was established with the paratroops located east of Rethimmon. The enemy offered only slight resistance when the advance eastwards was continued. Over 800 prisoners were taken and 30 guns, some of them of heavy calibre, were captured. Units pursuing routed enemy elements southwards from Suda Bay reached Komitadhes. Motorised advanced detachments occupied Sellia (east of Komitadhes).

In the Iraklion sector the number of prisoners has increased to about 800. The Greek Commanding General in this area offered to surrender his troops.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

29 May: A British tent encampment was observed 16 km south of Iraklion. British troops are located in and around the village of Ay. Thomás (south-south-west of Iraklion). A PoW camp with about 200 German prisoners was observed 2 km north of Ay. Thomás.

At 0500 hours three cruisers and six destroyers on a south-easterly course were observed 75 km south-east of Gavdos Island.

/At 0900

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

At 0900 hours this formation was located again 180 km south-east of Cape Sidhero.

Operations

27 May: At 0540 hours a British destroyer 25 km south-east of Cape Sidhero was badly damaged by a direct hit and a near miss with 250 kg bombs. The ship showed a list and left behind a wake of oil.

28 May: The following additional details of operations carried out on 28 May were reported:

In attacks on military objectives in the Iraklion area many hits were scored on the airfield, a barracks south-west of the airfield and on targets in the town. Enemy field fortifications and an observation post were rendered unserviceable.

Bombs dropped on Rethimnon caused fires and explosions.

On the Rethimnon - Iraklion road fifteen trucks were destroyed and a large number damaged.

German bombers silenced enemy machine-gun and artillery positions in the area Rethimnon - Arviroupolis - Roustika - Lefkojia and on Vrissinas mountain (south of Rethimnon).

In attacks on shipping, bombers scored the following additional successes:

<u>Off Suda Bay:</u>	1 fishing smack sunk.
<u>Palaichora (S coast):</u>	1 patrol boat badly damaged. Crew took to the boats. 1 deep-sea fishing boat damaged.
<u>NW of Crete:</u>	1 merchant ship of 1,800 tons damaged.

29 May: During the night aircraft attacked the Sfakia coastal sector in waves. Three large and two small fires were observed.

Enemy troop concentrations on both sides of the Iraklion - Timbaki road and in the area between Timbaki and Ierapetra were bombed and shot up by German bombers.

Other bombers made an effective attack on Pirgos as an alternative target. A fighter shot down a Hurricane over the west coast.

In an attack on Timbaki airfield four enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground.

Bombers sent out on operations against shipping attacked the enemy warships in the Caso Channel. A cruiser and a destroyer were sunk and near misses were observed on another cruiser which was probably damaged.

Other warships were attacked in the sea area south of Crete.

Details are not yet available.

Defence

Crete: Sporadic and mainly inaccurate AA defence.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	None reported.
<u>Enemy:</u>	1 Hurricane (in air battle over west coast of Crete) 2 bombers and 2 fighters, types not known, destroyed on ground at Timbaki.

/Italian Operations

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

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Other warships were attacked in the sea area south of Crete.

Details are not yet available.

Defence

Crete: Sporadic and mainly inaccurate AA defence.

Losses

<u>German:</u>	None reported.
<u>Enemy:</u>	1 Hurricane (in air battle over west coast of Crete) 2 bombers and 2 fighters, types not known, destroyed on ground at Timbaki.

/Italian Operations

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Italian Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

29 May: The Italian troops which landed at Sitia began to advance in the direction of Exo-Mouliana - Tourloti.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

29 May: At 0510 hours two cruisers and five destroyers on a south-south-easterly course were observed 9 km east of Cape Sidhero.

Operations

28 May: In the afternoon sixteen bombers attacked the formation of three cruisers and six destroyers observed by reconnaissance. A hit was scored on a cruiser.

Between 1956 and 1958 hours five torpedo-bombers attacked an enemy formation in the Gase Channel and scored hits on three cruisers. One cruiser began to list and ceased firing immediately and yellow flame was observed coming from another cruiser.

Fighters which carried out patrols while Italian troops were landing on Crete had no contact with the enemy.

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 630 (31 May 1941)

German Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

30 May: Units moving east from Rethimnon continued their advance on Iraklion without encountering enemy opposition and at midday established contact with the Iraklion battle group at Marathos (15 km west of Iraklion).

Units advancing south from Rethimnon encountered fortified British rearguard positions at Platanos (20 km south-south-east of Rethimnon) and broke through after an action lasting several hours. An enemy battle group comprising 1,200 men was taken prisoner.

Other units pursuing enemy troops retreating to the southern coast along the Rethimnon - Timbaki and Iraklion - Timbaki roads reached Vistayi (24 km south-east of Rethimnon) and Ay. Thomas (23 km south-south-west of Iraklion) at midday.

Advanced detachments from Iraklion began an advance in the direction of Neapolis and Ierapetra.

Enemy resistance has ceased everywhere in the northern part of the island. Isolated groups on the southern coast are attempting to escape to Gavdos Island by boat.

Air Situation

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

30 May: Enemy warships were observed only in the area south of Crete.

In the morning there was a formation of three cruisers and five destroyers on a south-easterly course about 80 km south of Cape Lithinos. This formation was sighted again later south of the 34th parallel on course for Alexandria.

At 0925 hours another formation comprising two heavy cruisers, four light cruisers and five destroyers was observed in the same sea area and on the same course.

Operations

28 May: During operations against enemy warships in the sea area south of Scarpanto a direct hit was scored on a light cruiser with a 250 kg bomb. In an attack on another light cruiser a near miss with a 250 kg bomb was observed.

30 May: Bombers attacked retreating enemy forces in towns and on roads and enemy troop concentrations in the centre of the island, particularly in the area between Margaritais and Timbaki (south-east of Rethimnon) and between the Selena Mountains and the Sidhonia headland (south-east of Iraklion).

There was no longer any activity by enemy aircraft or ground defence.

In the morning bombers, dive-bombers and twin-engined fighters sank a small merchant ship in Souyia Bay (east of Paliokhora); destroyed the lighthouse and signals installations at Ambelos (Gavdos Island), set an oil dump in the vicinity of the lighthouse on fire and shot up boats from Crete making for Gavdos.

According to preliminary reports a destroyer was so badly damaged astern in an attack on shipping in the sea area south of Crete that it can be regarded as sunk.

Losses

German:

28 May: 1 Ju 87 missing (Crete)

30 May: 1 Do 17 missing (Crete)

Enemy: None reported.

Italian Operations

Crete

Ground Situation

30 May: Italian troops reached Exo Mouliana, took 200 Greek prisoners and captured a large amount of equipment. Italian losses were slight.

Air Situation

Operations

29 May: Bombers on armed reconnaissance over the central section of the southern coast of Crete attacked enemy aircraft parked on Timbaki airfield.

/Fighters

R E S T R I C T E D

Fighters carried out patrols over the area west of Sitia to cover the advance of Italian troops.

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 631 (1 June 1941)

German and Italian Operations

Ground Situation

30 May: At 2115 hours motorised units advancing along the north coast linked up with Italian advance detachments. After an unopposed advance, German forces on the south coast reached Ierapetra at 2200 hours and established contact with Italian troops. The main force of the Italian Expeditionary Corps is advancing on Ierapetra.

German Operations

Ground Situation

30 May: At Kalivia (east of Suda Bay) 500 wounded left behind by the enemy were discovered. North of Sfakia two heavy and two light enemy tanks were destroyed.

31 May: Since morning German mountain troops have been mopping up groups separated from the disintegrating enemy force in the mountains behind the central sector of the south coast.

The total number of prisoners brought in so far amounts to 6,800 Greeks and over 2,400 British.

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

31 May: During the day no enemy warships were observed to the north, west and east of Crete. At 0515 hours two enemy destroyers were observed moving on a southerly course in the sea area south of Crete. These warships were sighted again at 0545 and 0650 hours. At 0735 hours they joined two or three other destroyers 140 km south of Kufonissi and continued in the direction of Alexandria. Later they were attacked by bombers.

At 0630 hours a hospital ship of 15,000 tons on a westerly course was sighted 65 km south-south-east of Ierapatra.

In the afternoon two light cruisers and three destroyers on a west-north-westerly course were observed 120 km south-west of Ierapetra.

Operations

30 May: German bombers pursuing enemy shipping moving out of the sea area Crete attacked the following:

0745 hours: One merchant ship of 1,000 tons 85 km east of Marsa Matruh: two 500 kg bombs were observed to fall near the ship, which began to list and reduced speed.

1130 to  
1150 hours: Two cruisers 175 km north-north-west of Marsa Matruh: several 500 kg and 250 kg bombs were observed to fall near the warships.

/1430 hours:

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

1430 hours One destroyer 125 km north-north-east of Marsa Matruh: a direct hit was scored with one 250 kg bomb and another 250 kg bomb and a 500 kg bomb were observed to fall near the ship. (This is the same destroyer which was reported probably sunk in Situation Report No. 630).

Time not stated: One destroyer, position not reported: a 500 kg bomb was observed to fall near the ship.

Time not stated: One patrol ship of 900 tons 130 km north-north-east of Bardia: sunk by bomb hits.

31 May: Light bombers attacked the radio station at Kufonissi. Other bombers attacked the towns of Pirgos, Ay. Dheka and Ay. Varvara as alternative targets.

Fighters shot up enemy troop concentrations at Sfakia and Loutro (7 km west of Sfakia) and covered transport aircraft landing at Rethimmon and Iraklion airfields.

Bombers attacked the following ships in the sea area south of Crete:

0745 hours: A 400 ton ship carrying troops 120 km north-north-east of Sidi Barrani: Two hits were scored with 250 kg bombs and 500 kg bomb fell near the ship. The ship caught fire and began to list.

0800 to 0850 hours: Four destroyers 150 km south of Kufonissi: Total number of direct hits: three with 500 kg bombs and one with a 250 kg bomb. Total number of bombs falling near the ships: six 500 kg bombs and five 250 kg bombs. Most of the destroyers are believed to have been badly damaged.

Time not stated: One merchant ship of 3,000 tons, position not reported sunk by bomb hits.

During the operations against enemy warships air battles developed between German bombers and enemy single-engined and twin-engined fighters. Hurricanes with auxiliary fuel tanks appeared for the first time, but proved to be inferior to the German bombers. One of them was shot down and another and a Blenheim twin-engined fighter were hit and made off pouring out smoke.

Defence

Strong defence by Hurricanes and Blenheim twin-engined fighters over the sea area south of Crete.

Enemy Operations

Crete

31 May: Enemy bombers made unsuccessful attacks on Iraklion from 0130 to 0235 hours.

Losses

31 May: German: 1 Me 109 shot down over Crete

31 May: Enemy: 1 Hurricane shot down south of Crete.

R E S T R I C T E D

Italian Operations

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

30 May: From 0500 to 0930 hours no enemy warships were observed by reconnaissance aircraft in the Caso Channel and in the sea area immediately to the south.

Operations

30 May: Fighters covered the advance of Italian troops on Crete.

Losses

Italian: None reported.

Enemy: None reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 632 (2 June 1941)

German Operations

Ground Situation

1 June: Mopping-up operations in southern Crete were continued. German forces reached Sfakia at 1350 hours. An attack in the direction of Loutro (about 7 km west of Sfakia) is in progress. According to reports received so far, the total number of British prisoners has reached three thousand.

At 2030 hours Generaloberst Loehr, Luftflotte 4 Commander, made the following report: "Crete clear of enemy forces today. A report will be made on the number of prisoners taken and guns captured etc. as soon as these figures have been confirmed."

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

1 June: At 0720 hours a cruiser and four light warships on a south-easterly course were observed 30 km south of Cape Lithinos. At 0905 hours a cruiser and four destroyers on a south-south-easterly course were observed about 190 km north-north-east of Sidi Barrani.

Operations

1 June: Light bombers supported German troops advancing on Sfakia and Loutro and successfully attacked AA positions in the operational area. In dive-bombing attacks on an enemy warship formation which had been reported, light bombers sank a destroyer with three direct hits (one 500 kg bomb and two 250 kg bombs) and scored a near miss on the stern of a cruiser with a 500 kg bomb, probably damaging the vessel.

Defence

Moderate AA fire from the warship formation south of Crete.

Losses

No German or enemy losses reported.

/Italian Operations

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Italian Operations

Air Situation

Reconnaissance

31 May: In the morning and afternoon three aircraft carried out reconnaissance over the Italian sector of advance on Crete.

There was no enemy shipping in the sea area from the Gaso Channel to Alexandria during the morning.

Losses

No Italian or enemy losses reported.

LUFTWAFFE SITUATION REPORT NO. 633 (3 June 1941)

According to reports received so far, the number of prisoners taken during the operations on Crete amounts to 8,000 British and 4,000 Greeks (including 2,000 Cretans). In addition 20 tanks, 50 guns (including two coastal artillery troops), large amounts of ammunition and several clothing and food dumps were captured. Enemy losses are estimated at about 5,000 killed.

R E S T R I C T E D